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## THE MORAL AND SOCIAL TASKS OF WORLD POLITICS ("IMPERIALISM").

THE Evangelical Social Congress of Germany has been mentioned several times in these communications. Originally founded to investigate the duties of our national church in the realm of the social question, it has, during the ten years of its existence, gradually developed into an association in which the general aspects of the duty of the state and of society may be considered on the basis of the gospel. From an ecclesiastical it has become a social-ethical society, and has increasingly directed its attention to questions which cannot be solved, at least altogether, by church agencies (agricultural laborers, 1894; the woman problem, 1895; trade, 1896; Germany's evolution as an industrial state, 1897; right of coalition, 1898; profit-sharing, 1899). By the preponderance of this social-ethical over the ecclesiastical purpose the last assembly of the congress was particularly characterized at its meeting in Carlsruhe, the principal city of the grand duchy of Baden, at the last Whitsuntide.

The first two themes which were then discussed touched subjects so specifically German that a report of them would not be suitable in this place. The question what should be done to give to boys just passed from the schools a better preparation for their economic, social, and religious functions, and the question as to the best means of improving housing conditions, both presuppose for an understanding of their occasion the knowledge of our educational and administrative systems and of our jurisprudence; and much more is such knowledge requisite for a judgment upon the proposals made for a solution. Therefore these two topics will not be further touched at this time.

All the more it seemed to me that the third topic might have a greater interest in America, because of late the United States has found itself in a situation similar to that of the German empire. The problem is: What moral and social duties belong to our people in consequence of the development of

Germany into a world-power? Naturally these questions at the Evangelical Social Congress were answered from a German standpoint and with a view to German relations. But the problems which are involved are of so general a nature that every other nation whose politics have been carried beyond the natural boundaries must feel their weight.

We understand by the phrase "development into a world-power" the compulsion which a nation feels to unfold its power beyond its own limits, because its interests are no longer confined to its own territory. It is clear that this pressure has for its immediate occasion an economic demand—protection of its own capital investments abroad, protection of its citizens who live abroad, the attainment of foreign markets for home industries, and of land on which our own capital can find employment under the protection of our own state power. Economic expansion of modern capitalism drives the peoples also to political expansion, to meddling with the internal affairs of foreign peoples; for example, the action which at this writing (June, 1900) involves China; to war with other peoples in respect to land, as the Spanish-American war about Cuba, England's contest against the Boers in South Africa; or the conquest of territory in which hitherto uncivilized peoples had control, as the war of the United States against the Philippines, Germany's colonization of Cameroon, East Africa, etc. Such contests for colonies and such interference in the affairs of foreign states cannot occur, as matters stand, without the development of power and force; and the use of force always implies violation of rights, at least of feelings of justice, which the governed cherish. Here arises the problem which found expression in the discussion of the Evangelical Social Congress. Can this policy be ethically justified? Can we reconcile with morality and with the principles of Christianity the conduct of a nation when it subdues another in order to obtain for itself a better place? Or, if political expansion is a *necessary* consequence of our present economic conditions, is there another kind of world-policy which appears to be in closer harmony with the moral principles of Christianity than that which expansion actually requires?

One cannot deny that these questions weigh heavily and earnestly at least on those who, even in politics, will not forget that they are Christians. It was a thrilling indication of the difficulty of this problem that one of the most distinguished and celebrated of our economists, Professor Dr. Adolph Wagner, of Berlin, declared to the congress that he was compelled to decline to report on the subject, because in considering the lecture a strong doubt had possessed him whether our world-policy can be really justified ; whether it can be reconciled with the Christian point of view. From the standpoint of self-preservation of the nation it may be necessary ; but whether this standpoint can be justified from the general human point of view seemed to him not clear. We base the necessity of imperialism, of the "greater Germany," upon our increase of population ; we need more bread, more work, and more land for the 800,000 human beings who are annually added to the number of our people. But is this increase of population something morally wholesome ? Have we, on the whole, a right in the sight of humanity to defend the indispensable necessity of our increase ?

These skeptical questions of one of the first of our economic professors indicate sufficiently the difficulties which this problem, so debated, presents to our ethical theorists. It is to be regretted that an entirely clear and decisive answer appears not to have been given to these doubts at the congress. According to my view, one should make substantially this statement: A people which surrenders the belief that its own existence has a significance for humanity in general thereby gives up all claim to a reason for being. It is the characteristic nucleus of the love of fatherland, of patriotism, of national feeling, or, as we may designate this fundamental political feeling of every sound, progressive people, it is faith in itself, the consciousness that it has a value, an importance in relation to mankind. This faith cannot be "proved," as if it were some kind of a theoretical principle ; much nearer accuracy would it be to call it an axiom, or better still, in the Kantian phrase, a moral postulate, a fundamental demand of the spirit, which is as really innate in men as nationality, in which it is manifested. To yield this faith would

mean to deny reason and purpose in history generally, and to abandon faith in the rational direction of the world. But in our circles this is the acknowledged and common ground on which we all move; for we believe in the reason in things, and we therefore believe that this reason shows itself in history in the evolution of various self-conscious nationalities. We do not know the final goal of human development, and we cannot know it because we are ourselves only a part of the way toward that goal. But this we believe, that every nation has the duty to pour into the stream of human development as much of its own, its peculiar spiritual possession, as it possibly can. Exactly in this value for humanity which each nation has, and in which we believe, without being able to prove it by experience to the skeptic, lies the moral basis and the moral right of our political aims. Precisely on moral grounds we say: The supreme law for a people (not for an individual!) is self-preservation and the deepening and diffusion of our national culture. This applies to every people which has a future before it. For every national policy faith in its own people is the natural moral foundation, and not the ideal of a work for humanity which overlooks these differences of nationality. If the requirements of self-preservation in two peoples are antagonistic, then it is the moral duty of each people to battle for its independence and self-preservation. There is then no ideal of humanity which should overcome faith in one's own people, which could demand renunciation of its own self-preservation; although that might be unconditionally the duty of an individual. There are only two ideals which are contrasted, both of which are justified in the consciousness of their holders. The solution of this contradiction lies in the realm of religion, that in history, after all conflicts, that will triumph which is best for all. But this faith in the rational unity of history should hinder no nation from pushing forward its own interests with all its might.

If the requirement of self-preservation is the supreme moral norm for a nation, then we cannot introduce any other standard for judgment. If we require for our political and economic independence expansion, then we must struggle for it with all

the means which experience has taught us are most conducive to the end. Thus it is our right and our duty to draw under our dominion other nations, especially the uncivilized, when the interest of our independence requires it. Therefore we cannot reproach the Americans if they conquer Cuba and the Philippines; nor can we morally condemn England when it claims that it needs rule over Kimberley and Johannesburg for its self-preservation. We may set forth our opposing interests and say that it is not to the advantage of Germany that England should rule alone in South Africa; but we have no right to reproach the English as immoral because they take care of their own interests. That is a conclusion from the highest moral principle of all politics, for we should not condemn in an antagonist what we consider in a similar situation right in ourselves. If the Evangelical Social Congress had set forth these ethical principles in their application to other nations, it would have been in opposition to the ordinary declarations of our public press, but it would have correctly stated the moral task of a people which is conducting world-politics.

As already said, the congress has only casually touched this fundamental side of the question. So it happened that Adolph Wagner, who took the skeptical attitude, was the first speaker in the debate, and meantime the leaders directed attention to other points. The first leader who spoke was Professor Rathgen, who had long served as professor in Tokio, Japan, and who had written a book on Japan's state economy, which may be known in America. He admitted the necessity, and therefore the rectitude, of an expansion policy in advance, and simply called attention to two questions: What are the right motives of a world policy; and, What moral principles should control the treatment of uncivilized nations which have been subdued? In reference to the first question, he denied that economic motives alone should urge a nation in the path of imperialism. There must be added a feeling of responsibility to lower peoples, the desire to coöperate in the rising civilization of mankind, even directly to labor in the service of the ideals of humanity which rises above nationality.

The second leader, Pastor Dr. Lepsius, went farther with this thought in the direction of a positive Christian foundation. Lepsius made a name for himself several years ago, at the time of the Turkish persecution of the Armenians, by a warm plea for aid to the Armenians by action on the part of the German state. At that time he urged that the German government ought to intervene for the protection of persecuted Christians, and undertook a great scheme of aid for the Armenians. When he desired to give lectures throughout Germany for that purpose the ecclesiastical authorities refused permission; whereupon he voluntarily laid down his pastoral office in order to devote himself to labor for the persecuted Armenians. It is easy to understand that Lepsius would wish to add to the purely humane argument of the first orator a more positively Christian element. According to him it is the duty of a world-power that it win the nations for the gospel. In the establishment of Christian world-powers a part of the reign of Christ is established over the peoples. Germany is called to gain this world-power by the physical claims of superfluous population, and, on the other side, religiously, by the superiority of Protestantism over the Romish and Slavic religions. But it must deepen in itself these strong religious motives, so far as they are defective, for these alone make them capable of fulfilling their religious duty in world-politics.

That which both orators had in common was that it is morally repugnant to urge purely economical and political motives for a national policy of expansion. Their demand is that there must be moral and religious motives, active and dominant, in the consciousness of the persons concerned, in order to give to world-politics a moral justification. Against this the well-known leader of the National Socialists, Friedrich Naumann, formerly a pastor, raised an energetic protest, which appeared to us entirely right. With great applause from one part of the assembly he declared that the only motive of world-politics in every people is self-preservation. If at the present on the entire continent there rules an unfriendly feeling toward England, it is not because England has a policy of expansion, but

only because it covers this policy with the pretense that it simply wishes to serve civilization and the general ideal of humanity. This pretense appears to us as hypocrisy, when we see that in the name of humanity that country merely extends its own power and increases its riches. As opposed to this, it is more honorable and more suitable to Protestantism that we carry on world-politics for the sake of the self-preservation of our nation, and because we will not yield our place by the side of the other great peoples of the earth. The expressions of Naumann are a consequence of the view, which we stated above, that self-preservation is for a people the supreme moral thought. The individual man must live according to the example of the compassionate Samaritan who offered himself for his neighbor who had fallen among robbers. An entire people, however, would act against its primary moral duty if it should hazard its own existence in order to rescue another. Therefore it happened that from all the Christian peoples not one came to the help of the persecuted Armenians, and that the embassy from the Boers the last few weeks has sought in vain for the intervention of any great power.

Naturally we do not mean to say that the extension of the dominion of a great nation may not have for a consequence the service of diffused culture. On the contrary, that will usually happen. But it should be denied that this possible result must under all conditions be a conscious purpose, an efficient motive for the policy of expansion, in order to give it a moral character. This success is usually an unconscious effect of acts which flow from motives of another kind. Exactly in this lies one of the chief factors in the historical progress of the world, that the acts of men have undesigned and unforeseen secondary effects which, when they have become facts, work decisively on the purposeful activity of men. In this phenomenon, which our celebrated philosopher Wilhelm Wundt has called the law of the heterogeny of ends, everyone who regards things from a religious point of view will reverence the control of a unifying will directing the world's history. We go so far as to hope that finally our political work will serve the highest and most general



interests of humanity. But this religious belief, this elementary confidence in God, is something completely different from basing our politics on a distinct Christian motive of neighbor-love and the extension of the kingdom of God. As soon as we enter upon the details of the policy of expansion we discover so much oppression of other peoples, so much destruction of lower cultures, so great annihilation of innocent and happy human life, that we should really be compelled to despair of justifying this policy if we did not regard our own national self-interest as the supreme moral norm for our political conduct.

With this, indeed, it is not suggested that brutality toward the lower peoples finds in this thought its moral justification. The danger is terribly great that the representative of a superior nation in the moment of contest with less civilized persons may forget all the consideration which we have accustomed ourselves to show, even to the enemy among peoples who are our equals. Here Professor Rathgen in his speech spoke good words in relation to the danger of a domineering spirit, of a frivolous, reckless brutality which has been so often the morally reprehensible consequence of a great colonial policy. We must entirely agree with him when he says that the morally righteous treatment of persons of lower culture is not their destruction, but their education. The commercial company which gets possession of land in any way for purely capitalistic interest will exploit this land and its inhabitants as quickly as possible in order to obtain interest and replacement of its capital as rapidly as may be. An example is found in the shocking administration of the Congo State, in respect to which of late some details have been published. A nation, however, which desires to found a permanent dominion on foreign soil, and to widen its territorial basis, will be compelled by its own self-interest to introduce a protective treatment of the natives. Its colonial policy will therefore correspond to that which we have attained at home of respect for human life and worth. In such a colonial policy the moral means of influencing foreign peoples—industrial education, missions, schools, care of spiritual-social agencies, influence of woman in colonial administrations—win ascendancy over a purely

brutal oppression. Only one condition belongs here that this moral-humane means of colonial policy may be applied : I mean that at home a feudal class shall not rule—a class not accustomed to esteem the worth of man in the lower classes. The best passage in Rathgen's lecture was that in which he said that the foreign colonial policy depends upon a strong social policy in our own land. Restriction of the domineering spirit at home is for Rathgen a fundamental presupposition for a morally justifiable policy abroad. Naumann also represented these thoughts with great acuteness: discipline and collective power within the people are the sole foundations upon which an enduring and sound foreign policy can be built. Only we must remark that Rathgen's lecture made the impression that he expected all salvation from this method of moral preaching which should change the heart of the rulers. But upon the effectiveness of this means there is little dependence. So long as the fact remains that the great majority of men act from self-interest, so long will the class of men accustomed to rule never voluntarily surrender their time-honored control. Individuals of superior nature are accessible to moral appeals, but most men in economic and political matters have shown themselves indisposed to give up, from ethical idealism, privileges which they have enjoyed. The only security, in our estimation, against a purely brutal colonial policy is the political control at home by a class of men who, from their own life-conditions, are the natural antagonists of brutal oppression. The democratic administration of a state in which the great mass of workingmen and peasants, those who in their own social and industrial life are compelled to strive every day against oppression and domination, determine the state's direction from their sentiments and ideas—only such a democratic administration can offer guarantees, and that only in uncertain measure, that force will be used with moderation in colonial affairs. The battle for the emancipation of the lower classes implies also for foreign policy the activity of new principles which in other times have been wanting.

DR. PHIL. MAX MAURENBRECHER.

BERLIN.